DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 222 SP 031 518

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TITLE Personal Feelings and Professional Attitudes of Prospective Teachers toward Homosexuality and Homosexual Students: Research Findings and Curriculum Recommendations.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 71p.; Revision of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *Education Majors; Higher Education; *Homosexuality; Preservice Teacher Education; Role Models; Secondary Education; Sex Discrimination; Sexual Harassment; *Social Bias; *Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses five specific questions: (1) What are the attitudes and feelings of preservice teachers toward homosexuality? (2) How do these compare with other samples of professional and student groups? (3) What contact have preservice teachers had with lesbians and gay men? (4) What are preservice teachers' views of their professional responsibilities in working with lesbian and gay youth? and (5) How do responses to these questions vary according to race, gender, area of certification, and point of professional study? In addressing these questions, this paper is divided into two sections: quantitative analysis of preservice teachers' attitudes and feelings regarding homosexuality; and, a conceptual analysis of the dilemma of homosexual students/educators and the responsibilities which educators have in addressing their needs and and in integrating the topic of homosexuality into the curriculum. (Author)

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Personal Feelings and Professional Attitudes of Prospective Teachers Toward Homosexuality and Homosexual Students: Research Findings and Curriculum Recommendations

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Revision of a Paper Presented at the
Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
San Francisco, CA
March, 1989

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Support for this research study has been provided by the Gay and Lesbian Advocacy Research Project, Inc., and the College of Education at The University of South Carolina.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the personal feelings and professional attitudes of preservice teachers toward homosexuality and homosexual students. Data reported in this paper were collected as part of a larger study of the quality of school life for gay and lesbian young adults.

A non-volunteer sample was used in this study. Two hundred and fifty eight preservice teachers attending The University of South Carolina participated in this study. Students attending an entry level educational foundations course and a terminal level student teaching seminar were administered a questionnaire mid-way through the semester. The questionnaire included two standardized attitudinal instruments. The Modified Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (MATH) survey and the Index of Homophobia (IH) scale. Additionally, a Homosexuality Knowledge Index (HKI) and Professional Attitudes Index (PAI) were completed by respondents.

This paper addresses five specific questions: (1) What are the attitudes and feelings of preservice teachers toward homosexuality? (2) How do these compare with other samples of professional and student groups? (3) What contact have preservice teachers had with lesbians and gay men? (4) What are preservice teachers' views of their professional responsibilities in working with lesbian and gay youth? (5) How do responses to these questions vary according to race, gender, area of certification, and point of professional study? In addressing these questions, this paper is divided into two sections: Quantitative analysis of preservice teachers' attitudes and feelings regarding homosexuality; and, a conceptual analysis of the dilemma of homosexual students/educators and the responsibilities which educators have in addressing their needs and the topic of homosexuality in the curriculum.

Some of the more salient findings are: (1) Most preservice teachers expressed negative attitudes about homosexuality and harbored homphobic feelings toward lesbians and gay men (2) As a group their feelings were more negative than their attitudes with those pursuing an elementary teaching certificate expressing the most negative attitudes and feelings; (3) Preservice teachers knowledge about homosexuality was minimal but those who were more knowledgeable expressed less negative attitudes and feelings; (4) As professionals, preservice teachers were most willing to

address issues of student harassment but less willing to assume a proactive counseling or teaching roles; (5) With the exception of attending school-sponsored workshops on strategies working with sexual minority students, only a minority of these prospective teachers expected to assume any other school-related activitiy; and, (6) Attitudes and feelings regarding homosexuality was strongly related to their willingness to engage in such activities; knowledge about homosexuality exerted a relatively weak influence.

The paper concludes with (1) a review of studies that have examined educators (preservice teachers, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators) attitudes toward homosexuality and feelings toward homosexual persons and (2) a discussion of recommendations for meeting the needs of homosexual students and integrating the topic of homosexuality into the school curriculum. Selected excerpts from interviews with lesbian and gay young adult are integrated into this section.

Section I: Quantitative Analyses

Overview of Related Research

Only a handful of studies, however, have examined issues relating to homosexuality in the context of the elementary or high school. These studies, focusing on guidance counselors, teachers, high school students, and gay/lesbian teachers, underscore the difficulty that such students face and the complexity of this topic.[1] While several studies have explored this topic with counselor trainees,[2] only one other study has examined the attitudes and feelings of persons preparing to be teachers.[3] Most literature on this topic has been descriptive advising educators of their professional responsibility to address the special needs and problems of homosexual students.[4]

More extensive research has been conducted during the past 15 years to determine the feelings of various populations toward homosexual women and men or their attitudes about homosexuality. With only a few exceptions, these studies have been conducted in metropolitan areas in the industrial North and far West.[5] Moreover, as one set of researchers have observed, most studies have assessed persons' attitudes toward homosexuality rather than their reactions to homosexual persons.[6]

These studies often report the relationships between attitudes and personality traits or demographic variables.[7] Though such studies are not without conflicting data, Gregory Herek has summarized some consistent patterns.[8] Persons with negative attitudes report less personal contact

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[1]Fischer, 1982; Price, 1982; Sears, 1988a; Smith, 1985

[2]Glenn & Russell, 1986; Schneider & Tremble, 1986; Thompson & Fishburn, 1977

[3]Baker, 1980

[4]See, for example, Gumaer, 1987; Krysiak, 1987; Schneider & Tremble, 1986; Sears, 1987; Sears, 1988b

[5]Fischer, 1982; Haynes & Oziel, 1976; Lance, 1987

[6]Hudson & Ricketts, 1980

[7]For a summary of many of these studies, see: Fyfe, 1983; Herek, 1984; Morin & Garfinkle, 1978.

[8]Herek, 1984

with gay and lesbians, fewer (if any) homosexual behavior, a more conservative religious ideology, and more traditional attitudes about sex roles than those with less negative views. Persons harboring negative attitudes about homosexuality are also more likely to have resided in the mid-west or southern region of this country, to have grown up in rural areas or in small towns, and to be male, older, and less well-educated than those expressing more positive attitudes.

Participants

A non-volunteer sample was used in this study. Two hundred and fifty eight preservice teachers attending The University of South Carolina participated in this study. Participants in this study attended either a required undergraduate social foundations course or were enrolled in a student teaching seminar between spring semester 1987 and spring semester 1988. The sample reflected enrollment patterns at USC with a preponderance of secondary education, female, and white students. Table 1 displays the breakdown of this sample according to the four principal demographic variables used in the analysis of these data.

Insert Table 1 Here

Most of the study participants (n=191) were attending a social foundations course This sub-sample was split evenly between secondary and elementary education majors. The typical respondent was a white, unmarried, twenty year old, solid "B" student from rural South Carolina taking her second education course. Most of the respondents were either sophomores or juniors and, on average, were taking their second or third teacher education course. One-third of the sample was active in a social fraternity or sorority and/or church activities.

Sixty-seven questionnaires were completed by preservice teachers completing their student teaching. The majority of these students were completing their MAT degrees; on average, they had taken seven teacher education courses. The typical respondent was a white, unmarried, twenty-eight year old female student teaching in a secondary school setting from which she graduated

TABLE 1

Breakdown of Key Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	N	%
Certification Area:[1]		
Elementary Education	92	36.8
Secondary Education	153	61.2
Gender		
Male	64	24.7
Female	191	75.3
Race		
Black	28	10.9
White	229	89.1
Point in Professional Studies		
Early	191	74.0
Late	67	26.0

[1]Due to the low number of special education students (n=5), only two certification areas were considered.

eleven years ago. This group differed from the larger sub-sample by virtue of their graduate status and coursework completed in education, greater proportion of male or married students, their focus on secondary teaching, and the length of time since graduating from high school.

Methodology

Students attending an entry level educational foundations course and a terminal level student teaching seminar were administered a questionnaire mid-way through the semester. Students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Completion of the questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes.

The questionnaire included two standardized attitudinal instruments. The modified Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (ATH) survey is a 30-item instrument that uses a nine-point Likert-type format with the range of scores from 30 to 270 (strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 9).[9] The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient is +.95. Criterion validity has been judged satisfactory.[10] In this study, the response categories was reduced to a five point Likert-type format with the range of scores from 30 to 150 (strong disagree 1 to strongly agree 5). For comparability with other studies, the ATH scores were divided by the maximum possible points to yield an index with a possible range of 20 to 100.

The Index of Homophobia (IH) is a measure of a person's reactions toward homosexual encounters and feelings toward homosexual persons. This 25-item summative category partition scale has a score range from 0 to 100. The alpha reliability coefficient is .90. The is good construct validity and very high content validity.[11]

In addition to these two standardized instruments, preservice teachers also completed the Preservice Teachers Knowledge and Attitudes About Homosexuality questionnaire, specifically

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[9]This instrument is a derivation of an earlier one, the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale (MacDonald, et all. 1973; Sobel, 1976).

[10]Price, 1982

[11]Hudson & Ricketts, 1980

designed for and refined during this study. This questionnaire is composed of four sub-sections: encounters with homosexual students as a high school student; knowledge about homosexuality; professional attitudes regarding homosexuality in the school curriculum; and projected professional behaviors regarding homosexual students. From this questionnaire, two scales were developed and used in this data analyses: the Homosexuality Knowledge Index (HKI) and the Professional Attitudes Index (PAI). Reliability and validity of these instruments are yet to be determined.

Data Presentation and Analysis: Introduction

This section addresses five specific questions: (1) What are the attitudes and feelings of preservice teachers toward homosexuality? (2) How do these compare with other samples of professional and student groups? (3) What contact have preservice teachers had with lesbians and gay men? (4) What are preservice teachers' views of their professional responsibilities in working with lesbian and gay youth? (5) How do responses to these questions vary according to race, gender, area of certification, and point of professional study? In addressing these questions, this section is divided into four parts: (1) attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality and homosexual persons; (2) encounters with homosexuality in high school; (3) knowledge about homosexuality; and, (4) professional attitudes and projected activities in the school. A summary follows the data presentation in each part.

Attitudes and Feelings Toward Homosexuality and Homosexual Persons

Two separate instruments assessed preservice teachers attitudes toward homosexuality (ATH) and their feelings toward lesbians and gay men (IH). A copy of these instruments are located in Appendix A and B, respectively. This section will discuss the distribution of these scores in this sample, compare these scores to other professional and student populations, and explore the relationship of this sample's scores to several demographic variables.

Distribution of summative scores. Given the unidimensionality of the ATH and the IH, respondents' summative scores were computed for each.[12] These adjusted scores could range from 0 (most positive) to 100 (most negative). Students' scores on the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality ranged from 0 to 98, with a mean score of 45, and a standard deviation of 18. Students' scores on the Index of Homophobia yielded more negative results. The scores ranged from 2 to 99, with a mean score of 65 and a standard deviation of 19. The relationship between these two scores are depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 Here

As indicated in Figure 1, the distribution of students' attitudes toward homosexuality (ATH) falls much more closer to the classic bell-shaped curve that do those for their feelings toward lesbians and gay men (IH). For example, one quarter of the sample scored between the ninth and tenth decile on feelings toward homosexual persons whereas less than 3 percent of the students scored in this range on the attitudes toward homosexuality.

Comparison with other populations. In order to provide a point of reference for interpreting these scores, data from other studies using the IH and the ATH are summarized in Table 2 and 3.

Insert Tables 2 & 3 Here

According to the authors of the Index of Homophobia scale,[13] scores of less than 25 evidence "high grade non-homophobics," and those who score between 25 and 50 are considered "low grade non-homophobics." Persons who scores lies between 50 and 75 are regarded as "low

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[12]Sears, 1988b

[13]Hudson and Ricketts, 1980:360

TABLE 2

Percentage Distribution of
Index of Homophobia Scores
Among Various Populations

Population	<25	25-50	51-75	>75	N	X
PRESERVICE TEACHERS	.03	.16	.44	.37	252	65
College Students[1]	.04	.33	.56	.07	300	53
Guidance Counselors[2]	.01	.26	.50	.22	141	61

[1] Hudson and Rickets, 1980
[2] Sears, 1988

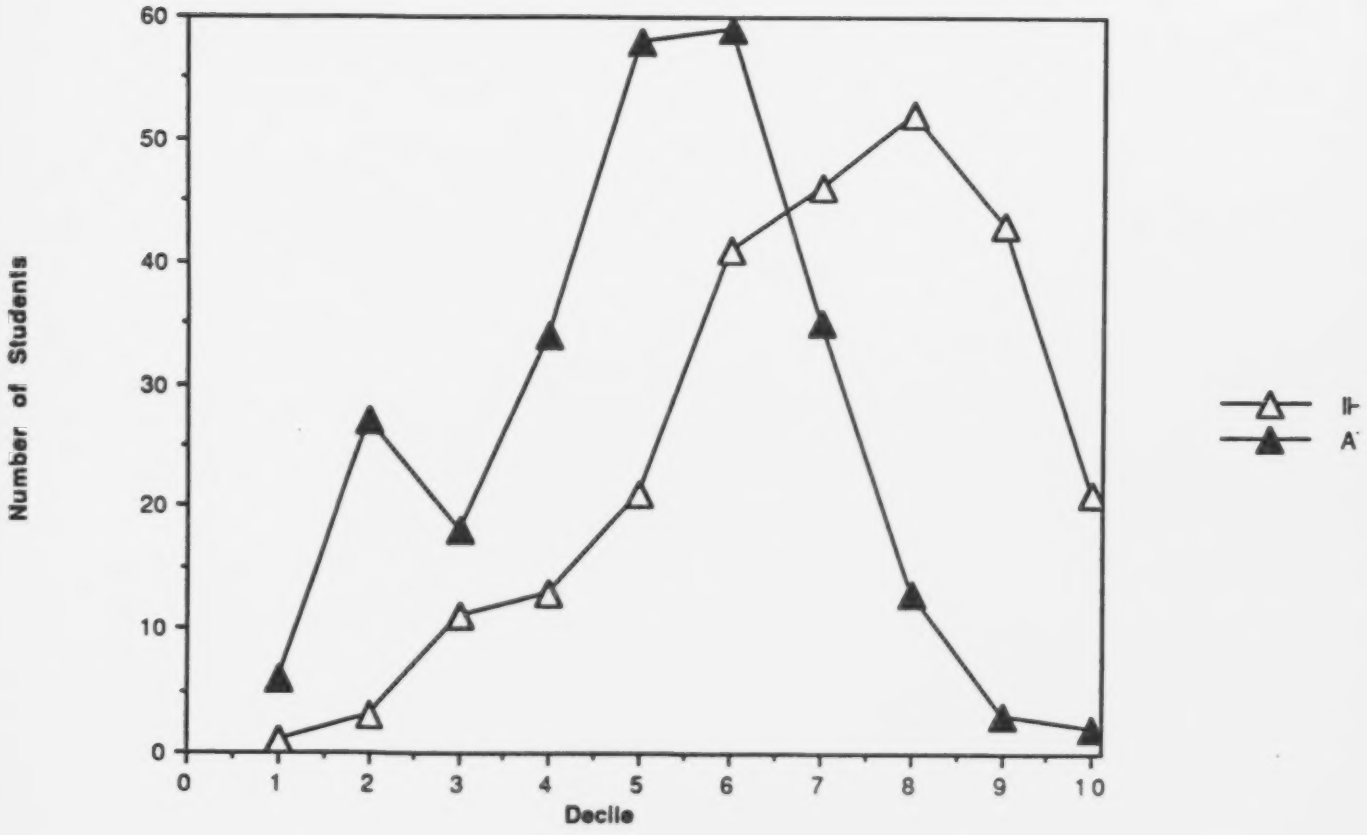
TABLE 3

Comparison of
Attitudes Toward Homosexuality
Among Various Groups

Population	X Score	N
PRESERVICE TEACHERS	56	255
Teachers[1]	42	255
High School Students[2]	60	278
College Students[3]	56	131
Counselors[4]	53	141

[1]Fischer, 1982
[2]Price, 1982
[3]Goldberg, 1982
[4]Sears, 1988

Figure 1
Distribution By Decile
of Preservice Teachers Attitudes Toward Homosexuality
and Feelings About Homosexual Persons



grade homophobics," and "high grade homophobics" score above 75. As Table 2 indicates, eight out of ten preservice teachers harbor negative feelings toward lesbian and gay men; fully one-third of these persons are high grade homophobics. This represents five times the number of high grade homophobics found in Hudson and Ricketts study a decade ago in Hawaii.

Given difference in geographic region and time, a more useful comparison is the sample of South Carolina guidance counselors surveyed at about the same time as these preservice teachers. As noted in Table 2, both the mean scores of these two groups and the proportion scoring above 50 are similar. The preservice teacher sample, however, is composed of half again the number of "high grade homophobics."

Attitudes about homosexuality among students and educators also have been assessed by several researchers. As shown in Table 3, preservice students attitudes' toward homosexuality, though less negative than a sample of Ohio high school students, is considerably less positive than a group of North Carolina teachers. Preservice teachers in this study scored slightly higher than a recent study of southern guidance counselors and identical to a sample of college students.

Relationship of scores to demographic variables. Table 4 depicts the relationship between preservice teachers' attitudes about homosexuality and feelings toward lesbian and gay men vis-a-vis their race, gender, area of certification, and point in the teacher education curriculum using multiple t-tests.

Insert Table 4 Here

As Table 4 indicates, the point at which students are at in their professional program of studies is not significantly related to either their attitudes toward homosexuality or their feelings toward lesbians and gay men. Further, no differences on students' attitudes or feelings were found with respect to gender. African-American preservice teachers were more likely to express negative attitudes toward homosexuality than Anglo students. However, there was no relationship

TABLE 4

Preservice Teachers'
Attitudes About Homosexuality and
Feelings Toward Lesbians and Gay Men
According to Respondents'
Gender, Race, Certification Area & Program Status

Demographic	ATH X	ATH SD	t	df	IH X	IH SD	t	df
Gender								
Male	45	18	- .16	192	64	18	-.49	113
Female	45	17			65	20		
Race								
White	45	18	-2.16	33*	65	20	-.70	34
Black	52	16			67	15		
Certification Area								
Elementary	50	17	3.18	208*	73	18	4.73	196*
Secondary	43	18			62	18		
Point in Professional Studies								
Early	45	19	.17	122	65	20	.47	142
Late	45	17			64	16		

* p <.001

between race and feelings expressed toward lesbians and gay men. Preservice teachers' area of certification was the only factor that discriminated on respondents attitudes and feelings. In both cases, students intending to teach at the elementary level evidenced more negative scores.

To explore the relative effects of race, gender, program status, and certification area, these four categorical factors together with age, marital status, college grade point average, and type of home community were entered into a multiple regression analysis using either student attitudes about homosexuality scores (ATH) or their scores on feelings toward lesbian and gay men (IH) as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses with the Beta weights appears in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 Here

These eight variables explain only11 percent of the variance on preservice teachers' attitudes toward homosexuality and 13 percent of the variance on their feelings toward lesbians and gay men. However, two or three variables account for the majority of this variance. Using a step-wise multiple regression analysis, certification area, home community, and point in professional studies explain slightly less than seven percent of the reported preservice teachers' variance on their attitudes toward homosexuality; area of certification explaining one-third of that variance. With respect to preservice teachers' feelings, area of certification and point in the teacher education curriculum explained more than ten percent of the variance with area of certification representing 95 percent of that variation.

Summary. In this sample of southern preservice teachers, most expressed negative attitudes about homosexuality and harbored homophobic feelings toward lesbians and gay men. As a group, however, their feelings were more negative than their attitudes. In comparison with other populations, these preservice teachers held much more negative feelings. They were five times more likely to be classified as "high grade homophobics" than a group of college students surveyed a decade ago. Further, in comparison with a recently sampled group of southern

TABLE 5

Multiple Regression (Betas) of Categoric/Demographic Variables onto Preservice Teachers' Scores on Attitudes About Homosexuality and Feelings Toward Homosexual Persons

Factor	ATH	IH
Age	-.12	-.16
Gender	-.06	-.09
Certification Area	-.26*	-.36*
Point in Professional Studies	.18*	.18*
Race	0	-.06
Home Community	-.15*	-.03
GPA	.10	.01
Marital	.06	.02

* Regression coefficient greater than twice its standard error

guidance counselors, they also were more likely to express negative feelings toward lesbians and gay men. Less noticeable differences were found among these preservice teachers and other professional or student groups with respect to attitudes about homosexuality. In all cases, the scores were moderately negative.

Some clear differences with respect to the four demographic variables were found. Most importantly, preservice teachers pursuing certification in elementary education were more likely to harbor homophobic feelings and express homo-negative attitudes than those planning to teach in the secondary schools. Black preservice teachers also expressed more negative attitudes about homosexuality than their white counterparts but were not any more homophobic in their feelings toward lesbians and gay men.

Two or three factors account for most of the variance discerned in preservice teachers attitudes and feelings. In no case, however, was more than 15 percent of the variance explained. The type of home community, point in professional program, and certification area accounted for the majority of the variance on preservice teachers' attitudes about homosexuality. These two later factors accounted for the vast majority of the variation in preservice teachers' feelings toward lesbians and gay men. Interestingly, race, age, and gender exerted little influence on preservice teachers' attitudes or feelings vis-a-vis the three aforementioned variables.

Encounters with Homosexuality in High School

About six years have elapsed since respondents in this study graduated from high school. The actual range was 1 to 41 years. However, nearly two-thirds of the sample had left high school within the past four years; about one in ten respondents had graduated from high school 15 years or later. Students at the early point in their professional studies had completed high school, on average, four years earlier; students completing their student teaching and participating in the MAT program had completed high school eleven years ago. This section examines respondents' exposure to homosexuality and homosexual students while attending high school. Further, the relationships between preservice teachers' present attitudes and feelings regarding homosexuality

and lesbians and gay men and their exposure to this topic or acquaintance with lesbian and gay students during their high school years are explored.

Association with lesbian and gay students. Four questions were posed regarding preservice teachers' acquittance with lesbian and gay students. These questions and the distribution of responses are presented in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 Here

Table 6 indicates that nearly one-half of the respondents suspected a fellow high school student of having a homosexual orientation, and more than one-quarter knew such a student. As respondents' social distance decreased, so did their knowing association with lesbians and gay students during high school. About one in four suspected a friend of having a homosexual orientation; fewer than one out of five acknowledged associating with a lesbian or gay friend during high school. No significant differences were found these associations and the respondents' point of their professional preparation.

Comparison of preservice teachers' current feelings toward lesbians and gay men and attitudes about homosexuality were examined in light of these high school experiences. With the exception of suspecting a fellow student of being gay or lesbian, preservice teachers who as high school students knew a homosexual student, or either suspected or had a friend who was lesbian or gay evidenced less negative feelings toward homosexual persons. In an absolute sense, however, these feelings were still in the "low grade homophobic" range. Further, knowing a student or having a friend who was gay or lesbian or suspecting that friend had a homosexual orientation also were related to less negative attitudes about homosexuality. With regard to both preservice teachers' attitudes and feelings, knowing a friend who was lesbian or gay in high school was the most significant discriminator. These data are depicted in Tables 7 and 8.

TABLE 6

Respondents Association with
Lesbian and Gay Students
While Attending High School

Relationship	No	Yes
Suspected another student of having a homosexual orientation	.55 (143)	.45 (115)
Knew a student who had a homosexual orientation	.72 (186)	.28 (72)
Suspected a friend of having a homosexual orientation	.74 (190)	.26 (68)
Knew a friend who had a homosexual orientation	.82 (212)	.18 (46)

Insert Tables 7 & 8 Here

Exposure to homosexuality. Respondents addressed nine questions relating to their exposure to homosexuality during their high school years. One question asked them to assess the adequacy and accuracy of information about homosexuality provided to them during high school. Three fourths of the sample (n=190) did not believe such information was accurate or adequate. Students who reported that they were provided with accurate and adequate information, however, harbored less negative attitudes about homosexuality (Provided X = 52, Not Provided X = 58; df=110, t=2.4; $p < .001$) and exhibited less negative feelings toward lesbians and gay men (Provided X = 60, Not Provided X = 67; df=97, t=2.4; $p < .001$).

Preservice teachers also were asked to assess the extent to which their fellow high school students and educators were knowledgeable about homosexuality and the degree of acceptance exhibited toward it. The frequency distributions of these responses are presented in Table 9.

Insert Table 9 Here

There are several interesting findings to highlight in this table. First, as evidenced by the large proportion of the sample responding "don't know" to items on educators, homosexuality was not an issue on which most counselors and teachers had taken a school position. A substantial number of respondents simply were unaware of educators' knowledge about homosexuality or the degree of support they accorded to homosexual students or gay rights. The absence of classroom discussion in all but a few classrooms may explain why so few respondents could assess the position of their teachers.

Second, when asked if all or most of the school's faculty were knowledgeable about homosexuality, twice as many of the teaching faculty (.41) than the counseling staff (.21) were rated as such by these respondents. A very large percentage (.40) of the respondents, however,

TABLE 7

Preservice Teachers Feelings
Toward Homosexual Persons
According to Their Association with
Lesbian and Gay Students
While Attending High School

Relationship	IH X		IH SD		t	df
	No	Yes	No	Yes		
Suspected another student of a homosexual orientation	66	64	17	22	.69	208
Knew a student who had a homosexual orientation	66	62	19	21	1.35	117*
Suspected a friend of a homosexual orientation	67	58	19	21	2.5	60*
Knew a friend who had a homosexual orientation	68	53	18	22	4.44	58*

* $p < .001$

TABLE 8

Preservice Teachers Feelings
Toward Homosexual Persons
According to Their Association with
Lesbian and Gay Students
While Attending High School

Relationship	ATH X		ATH SD		t	df
	No	Yes	No	Yes		
Suspected another student of a homosexual orientation	57	56	14	15	.5	228
Knew a student who had a homosexual orientation	57	54	14	17	1.4	109*
Suspected a friend of a homosexual orientation	58	50	14	16	3.1	60*
Knew a friend who had a homosexual orientation	58	46	13	16	4.9	59*

*p <.001

TABLE 9

Respondents Assessment of
Fellow High School Students
and Their High School Educators
Knowledge and Acceptance of Homosexuality

Group Characteristic	Approximate Size of Group[1] All	Most	Some	Few	None	Don't Know
Students knowledgeable about homosexuality	.11 (28)	.36 (94)	.26 (67)	.20 (51)	.02 (4)	.04 (14)
Teachers knowledgeable about homosexuality	.14 (37)	.27 (69)	.21 (54)	.15 (39)	.02 (4)	.21(55)
Counselors well informed about homosexuality	.09 (23)	.12 (32)	.12 (30)	.14 (35)	.13 (34)	.40(104)
Students displaying negative attitudes about homosexuality	.11 (28)	.73 (187)	.09 (24)	.02 (5)	.02 (4)	.04 (10)
Teachers supportive of homosexual students	----	----	.05 (14)	.19 (48)	.29 (74)	.47 (126)
Students considering homosexuality an alternative lifestyle	.01 (2)	.02 (6)	.07 (17)	.54 (190)	.22 (56)	.14 (37)
Teachers considering homosexuality an alternative lifestyle	----	.02 (5)	.09 (24)	.34 (88)	.21 (55)	.33(86)
Teachers discuss homosexuality in the classroom	----	.02 (4)	.06 (15)	.39 (100)	.48 (124)	.16(15)

[1]Percentages rounded to nearest decimal point

simply reported no basis for assessing their counselors knowledge. Interestingly, respondents generally rated their fellow students, as a group, more knowledgeable about the subject than the faculty. Again, this may reflect the degree of access which respondents typically had to members of each of these groups.

Third, while their fellow students may have been considered more knowledgeable than their educators, these students also were very likely to display negative attitudes on this topic. Eight out of ten preservice teachers noted that most if not all of their fellow students in high school harbored such homo-negative attitudes. And, like their teachers, few or none considered homosexuality an alternative lifestyle.

Summary. About one in four of the respondents in this study knew a student who had a homosexual orientation or suspected one of their friends was lesbian or gay during their high school years. One in five had a homosexual friend during high school. Preservice teachers who had one or more of these associations during high school exhibited less negative attitudes about homosexuality and held less homophobic feelings toward lesbians and gay men than those who lacked such associations. Having a homosexual friend in high school was the most significant discriminator.

Exposure to homosexuality was another dimension of these preservice teachers' high school experiences. Most reported that the information provided about this topic was neither accurate nor adequate. The one-quarter of the sample provided with such information scored lower on both the attitudinal and feeling scales.

There are two caveats in interpreting these data. First, while prior (high school) association with lesbians and gay persons was related significantly to less negative attitudes and feelings, the scores of these students were still in a moderately high range. That is, simply knowing a friend who is lesbian or gay or receiving accurate information about homosexuality in high school does not correlate with positive attitudes about homosexuality or feelings toward homosexual persons. Generally, though, the relationship is one in which their feelings and attitudes are less negative. Second, within the limits of this study it is not possible to determine the causal relationship, if any,

which exists between encounters with homosexual persons or exposure to homosexuality and the less homophobic feelings or homo-negative attitudes expressed by such persons.

A substantial number of preservice teachers could not assess the knowledge or attitudes of their high school teachers or counselors with respect to homosexuality. Classroom discussion about homosexuality was conducted by few or none of their teachers. Though these respondents rated their fellow high school students more knowledgeable about this topic than their educators, a vast majority reported that all or most of these students displayed negative attitudes about homosexuality.

Knowledge About Homosexuality

In order to assess preservice teachers' current knowledge about homosexuality, a 14-item test was developed that included questions from the natural and behavioral sciences. A majority of the preservice teachers answered 10 of the 14 questions correctly. These responses are arranged in order of correct frequency in Table 10.

Insert Table 10 Here

Items which had the most correct responses included those that directly dealt with childhood sexuality. Most respondents correctly noted that homosexuality is not a phase which children outgrow and that sexual orientation is established at an early age. Relatively few preservice teachers, however, were aware of the legal status of homosexual acts in most states, acknowledged that during an adult lifetime, most men and women engage in homosexual and heterosexual behaviors, and that such activities occur in many animal species.

Individual scores from this 14-item test were calculated yielding a Homosexuality Knowledge Index (HKI) which ranged from 0 (lowest possible score) to 100 (perfect score). The distribution of preservice teachers on this index in pictured in Figure 2.

TABLE 10

Correct Response Percentages
on Knowledge about Homosexuality

Item	Correct Response	% Correct Response
Homosexuality is a phase which children outgrow	False	81
There is a good chance of changing homosexual persons into heterosexual men and women	False	77
Most homosexuals want to be members of the opposite sex	False	76
Some church denominations have condemned the legal and social discrimination of homosexual men and women	True	76
Sexual orientation is established at an early age	True	72
According to the American Psychological Association, homosexuality is an illness	False	64
Homosexual males are more likely to seduce young boys than heterosexual males are likely to seduce young girls	False	58
Gay men are at least four times likely to be victims of criminal violence as members of the general public	True	54
A majority of homosexuals were seduced in adolescence by a person of the same sex, usually several years older	False	53
Sixty percent of pre-adolescent males report at least one homosexual experience	True	52
A person become a homosexual (develops a homosexual orientation) because he/she chooses to do so	False	46
Homosexual activity occurs in many animals	True	40
Most adults engage in neither exclusive homosexual or heterosexual behavior	True	29
Sexual relations between two people of the same sex is a criminal act in most states, including SC	False	28

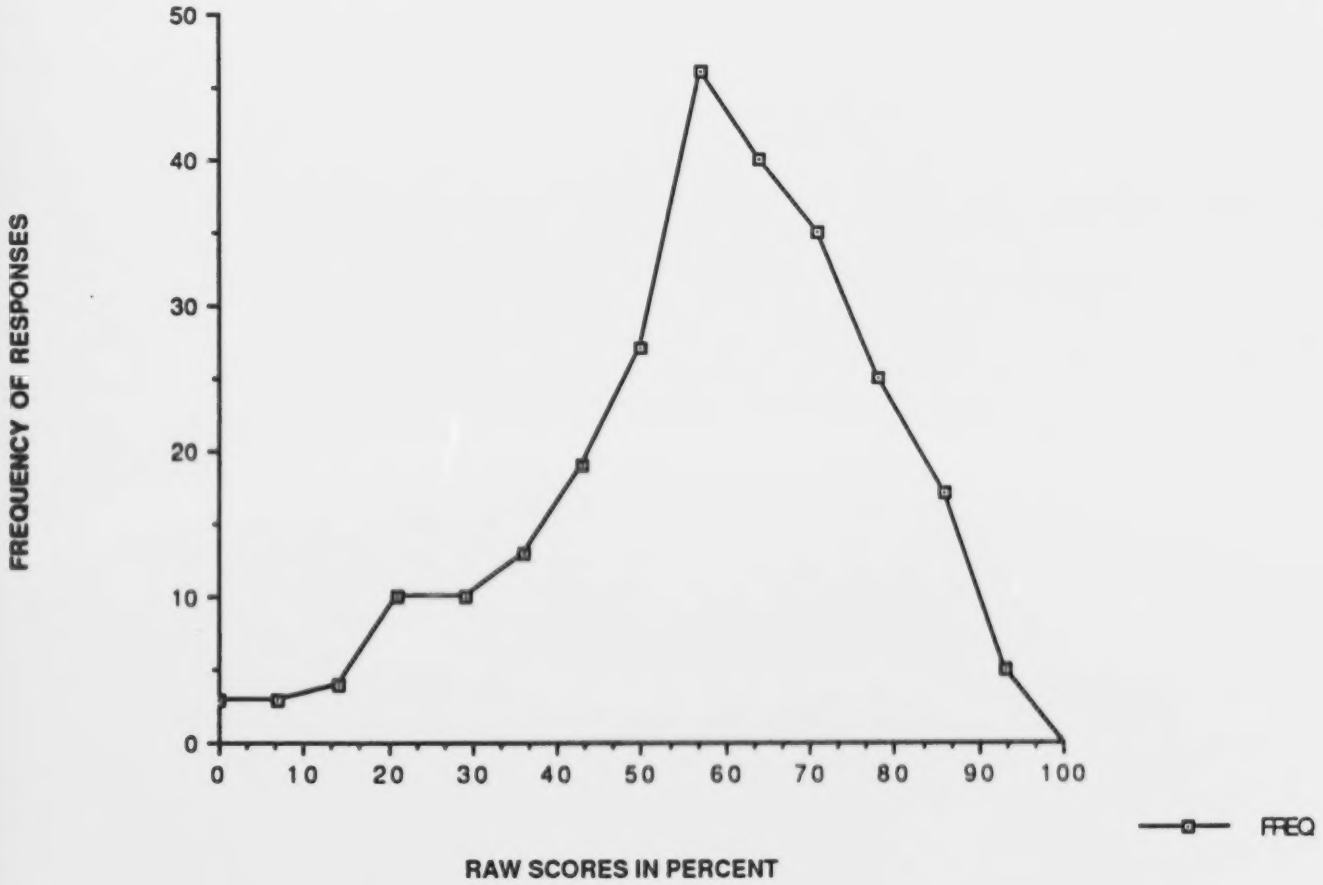
Insert Figure 2 Here

These scores roughly conformed to a normal bell-shaped curve. The mean score was 57.5 with a range of 0 to 92 and a standard deviation of 19.5. One-third of the respondents scored at or above the 60th percentile. No significant differences on these scores were found between preservice teachers who were at the early point in their professional studies and those who were completing their teacher education curriculum. However, relationships were found between the other three demographic factors. Africna-American preservice teachers were less knowledgeable about homosexuality than their white counterparts (Black X = 50, White X = 58; df =31, t=2.0; p <.001). Similarly, females evidenced less knowledge than males (Females X = 56, Male X = 61; df =110, t =1.6; p<.001). Finally, preservice teachers pursuing certification in elementary education were less knowledgeable than their secondary education cohorts (Elementary X = 55, Secondary X = 59.2; df =208, t=-1.7; p<.001).

Preservice teachers were also asked if they currently were well-informed about homosexuality. One in seven respondents strongly agreed with this statement and more than one-half (.54) agreed. A significant difference was found between preservice teachers' self-assessments and their actual scores on the Homosexuality Knowledge Index (t =5.2, df =140, p <.001). Among the two-thirds who believed themselves to be knowledgeable, the average score on the Index was 62; those who noted their lack of knowledge averaged a score of 48. Further, significant differences were found between race (t =-1.3, df =29, p <.05) and certification area (t =1.9, df =197, p <.001) vis-a-vis preservice teachers' self-assessment of their knowledge. Both Blacks and elementary majors considered themselves less well-informed than whites and secondary majors.

The scores on the 14-item knowledge test were then correlated with the respondents' scores on the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale and the Index of Homophobia scale. In both cases, negative correlations were found (ATH r = -.34; IH r = -.26). That is, the more knowledgeable

FIGURE 2
Distribution of Scores for Knowledge About Homosexuality



the student, as measured on the Homosexual Knowledge Index, the less negative attitudes toward homosexuality and feelings toward lesbians and gay men were evidenced.

In order to discern this pattern more fully, preservice teachers scoring one standard deviation above or below the mean on the Homosexual Knowledge Index were selected. The t-test results are presented in Table 11.

Insert Table 11 Here

Significant differences were found between most knowledgeable/least knowledgeable students and their attitudes about homosexuality and their feelings toward lesbians and gay men. Students who demonstrated the least knowledge harbored the most negative attitudes and were the most homophobic.

This relationship is further confirmed in comparing preservice teachers' self-assessments of their knowledge with their scores on the ATH and the IH. Preservice teachers' knowledge assessment positively correlated with both scores on attitudes toward homosexuality (.36) and feelings toward lesbians and gay men (.36). That is, those preservice teachers who considered themselves uninformed about homosexuality expressed more negative attitudes about homosexuality (Not Informed $\bar{X} = 62$, Informed $\bar{X} = 53$; $df = 186$, $t = -5.0$; $p < .001$) and harbored more negative feelings toward lesbians and gay men (Not Informed $\bar{X} = 72$, Informed $\bar{X} = 62$; $df = 195$, $t = -4.5$; $p < .001$) than those who believed themselves to be informed about the topic.

Summary. Preservice teacher's cumulative knowledge about homosexuality was minimal. Though they were more likely to correctly understand the psychosexual dynamics of childhood than the legal or biological aspects of homosexuality, most would have failed the knowledge "test" if passing would have been set at 60 percent. Women, African-Americans, and elementary education majors evidenced less knowledge than their male, Anglo, and secondary education cohorts.

TABLE 11

Knowledgeable and Not Knowledgeable
Preservice Teachers Scores on
Attitudes About Homosexuality
and Feelings Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

Knowledge Index	ATH X	ATH SD	t	df	IH X	IH SD	t	df
Low Scorers	65	10	6.7	85*	75	16	4.69	84*
High Scorers	48	14			57	21		

* $p < .001$

The question of the relationship between preservice teachers' knowledge and their attitudes/feelings regarding homosexuality yielded noteworthy results. The more knowledgeable the student the less negative attitudes toward homosexuality and feelings toward lesbians and gay men were evidenced. However, even when comparing the extreme groups on their knowledge about homosexuality, the absolute scores for both groups were still high.

Thus, like high school associations, adequate and accurate knowledge about homosexuality lessened preservice teachers' negative attitudes and feelings; they did not eliminate them. The importance of this point is evident when exploring their professional attitudes and expected behaviors relating to homosexuality or lesbian/gay students.

Professional Attitudes and Projected Activities in the School

Preservice professional attitudes regarding homosexuality and their professional behaviors regarding homosexual persons and incidents were gauged by two instruments. One was a 14-item four point Likert-type scale and the other was a 8-item activity list of expected professional activities.

Professional Attitudes in School. The 14-item questionnaire is divided into five categories: classroom interaction, counseling, student harassment, homosexual teachers, and human rights. The proportion of students responding affirmatively to statements within each of these categories are indicated in Table 12.

Insert Table 12 Here

As indicated in Table 12, preservice teachers expressed a willingness to assume a gay affirmative position in a variety of areas and instances. The category that preservice teachers expressed the greatest willingness to address was in the area of student harassment. A substantial majority of preservice teachers expected to take appropriate action in a variety situations involving the harassment of students due to their actual or perceived homosexuality. Further, nearly three-

TABLE 12
Preservice Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviors Relating to Homosexuality in the School

Statement	% Agree	N (n=258)
Classroom Interaction		
Teachers who regard homosexuality in a negative way should be able to request a homosexual student to enroll in another class	36.9	93
I would discuss homosexuality in the classroom	28.5	70
It would be difficult for me to deal fairly with an avowed homosexual student	24.3	62
Counseling		
Providing a homosexual high school students with supportive materials is appropriate for a teacher	49.2	121
I would feel comfortable if a student talked with me about his or her sexual orientation	36.3	93
Student Harassment		
I would discipline a student for harassing another student suspected of having a homosexual orientation	85.9	219
I would openly disagree with a faculty member who made a disparaging comment about a suspected homosexual student	64.0	162
I would discipline a student for making a derogatory remark about homosexuals	63.6	159
I would ignore student jokes about homosexuals	41.8	107
Homosexual Teachers		
I would feel uncomfortable if my school hired an openly gay or lesbian teacher	51.7	132
Homosexual persons should not be allowed to teach in the public schools	25.5	63
Adolescents who know several homosexual teachers will be strongly influenced to be homosexual	22.1	36
Human Rights		
A teacher must work in school to lessen prejudicial attitudes about homosexuality	62.1	157
I would work in my community to bar discrimination against homosexual men and women	32.4	80

fourths of the preservice teachers did not believe they would have difficulty treating an openly gay student fairly.

On the other hand, preservice teachers were most reticent about assuming a proactive counseling or teaching roles and working with an openly homosexual teacher striving to end discrimination against lesbians and gay men in their community. About one-half of the sample thought it would be appropriate for a teacher to provide supportive materials to a lesbian or gay student but less than one-third noted they would feel comfortable speaking with a student about his or her homosexuality or discussing homosexuality in the classroom.

Responses to these statements resulted in the adoption of two seemingly paradoxical positions. First, though only one-quarter of these preservice teachers believed that homosexual adults should not teach in public schools, more than one-half would feel uncomfortable if an openly lesbian or gay teacher worked at their school. Second, though these college students agreed that teachers must work in the school to lessen prejudicial attitudes about homosexuality, fewer than one-third indicated a willingness to work toward such an end within their communities. This lack of apparent commitment to adopt of more proactive position by these preservice teachers will be further explored in the third part of this section. The next part examines the relationship of these responses to student scores on the ATH, IH, and HKI instruments.

Relationship of Professional Attitudes to Feelings/Attitudes/Knowledge about Homosexuality. A summative score for this 14 item questionnaire was computed by reversing the codes of positively worded statements and assigning 1 through 4 points on the basis of participants' item responses. The possible range of this summative score, the Professional Attitude Index (PAI), is from 14 (low) to 56 (high); the actual range was 17 to 55 with a mean of 38 and a standard deviation of 6.

Students' scores on the Professional Attitude Index were correlated with those of the Homosexual Knowledge Index, the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality scale, and the Index of Homophobia scale. As expected, preservice teachers' professional attitudes showed a mild correlation with their knowledge on homosexuality (.25). The degree of the negative correlation

between their professional attitudes and the attitudes about homosexuality (-.76) and feelings toward lesbians and gay men (-.66) was unexpectedly powerful.

Preservice teachers who were at the student teaching point of their professional studies exhibited significantly lower scores on this index than those at the early point of their teacher education curriculum (Late Students X = 37, Early Students X = 39; df =103, t =2.5; p <.001), but no significant differences on this Index was found on dimensions of area of certification and gender. Given the important role that area of certification has played on other aspects discussed in this paper, the relationship of this variable to students' Index scores was further examined by controlling for the level of student studies. As expected, students pursuing an elementary certificate at the early point of their teacher education curriculum scored significantly lower on the Index than their secondary cohorts (Elementary X = 38, Secondary X 40; df =143, t =-1.7; p <.001). Further, white preservice teachers scored significantly higher on the Index than black students (White X =38, Black X =37; df = 47, t =1.3; p < .05).

Finally, preservice teachers scoring one standard deviation above or below the mean on the Professional Attitude Index were selected. T-tests were conducted to discern the margin of difference among these more extreme groups vis-a-vis their attitudes about homosexuality and feelings toward lesbians and gay men.

Insert Table 13 Here

As illustrated in Table 13, students who expressed low professional regard, as measured on the PAI, for issues relating to homosexuality in the schools, fit within the domain of "high grade homophobics" while those who expressed a high professional regard were within the "low grade non-homophobics" domain. Similarly, a 50 point spread on attitudes toward homosexuality separated those who expressed a high regard for addressing homosexual issues in the school compared with those whose regard was low.

TABLE 13

High and Low Professional Attitudes of
Preservice Teachers Scores on
Attitudes About Homosexuality
and Feelings Toward Lesbians and Gay Men

Attitude Index	ATH X	ATH SD	t	df	IH X	IH SD	t	df
Low Scorers	64	11	16	36*	81	12	9.4	23*
High Scorers	13	10			35	18		

* $p < .001$

Projected Activities in the School. The second instrument used to assess preservice willingness to address issues relating to homosexuality in the schools was a 8-item check list of possible professional activities. Preservice teachers were asked to check those activities in which they reasonably expected to participate as a teacher in South Carolina. These activities, arranged in order of frequency of occurrence, are listed in Table 14.

Insert Table 14 Here

With the exception of attending a school sponsored workshop on strategies dealing with lesbian and gay students, only a minority of this sample of southern preservice teachers expected to engage in professional activities relating to homosexuality. Further, those activities which required the greatest risk or visibility -- encouraging classroom discussion on homosexuality, integrating homosexual themes into the curriculum or meeting with homosexual adults -- were the least selected activities.

The relationships between preservice teachers' attitudes about homosexuality, feelings toward lesbians and gay men, knowledge about homosexuality, and professional attitudes about homosexuality are explicated in Table 15.

Insert Table 15 Here

Without exception, preservice teachers' scores on three of the scales -- the Attitudes About Homosexuality Scale, the Index of Homophobia, and the Professional Attitudes About Homosexuality Index -- were related in the expected manner. That is, preservice teachers who expressed less negative attitudes about homosexuality or harbored less homophobic feelings toward lesbians and gay men were more likely to indicate a willingness to engage such professional activities. Further, those who expressed more supportive professional attitudes regarding homosexual issues were also more likely to hold an expectation for participating in these activities. With the exception of preparing educational materials for interested students on

Table 14

Distribution of Agreement About
Expected Professional Activities
Among Preservice Teachers

Professional Activity	% Agreed	N
1) Attend school sponsored workshop on strategies in working with gay students	.75	185
2) Prepare educational materials for students interested in homosexuality	.31	77
3) Assemble resource packet on homosexuality for teachers in the school	.29	72
4) Discuss concerns of gay students at faculty meeting	.26	64
5) Engage in dialogue with parents about homosexuality at a school sponsored program	.26	64
6) Meet with homosexual adults to learn more about gay students special needs	.23	56
7) Encourage classroom discussion about homosexuality	.23	56
8) Integrate homosexual themes and issues into the curriculum	.15	37

TABLE 15

Distribution of Preservice Teachers' Scores on Four Instruments According to Their Expectation of Engaging in Supportive Activities*

Activity	IH	ATH	HKI	PAI
1) Attend Workshop				
YES	65	56	---	39
NO	68	59	---	37
2) Student Educational Materials				
YES	60	50	60	41
NO	68	56	59	37
3) Teacher Resource Packet				
YES	60	53	---	40
NO	67	58	---	38
4) Faculty Meeting				
YES	59	50	---	42
NO	68	59	---	37
5) Parent Dialogue				
YES	61	52	---	41
NO	67	58	---	37
6) Homosexual Adults Meeting				
YES	54	47	---	43
NO	69	59	---	37
7) Encourage Classroom Discussion				
YES	54	48	62	43
NO	69	59	56	37
8) Integrate into Curriculum				
YES	54	48	---	43
NO	68	58	---	38

* all data are significant with $p < .001$

homosexuality and integrating homosexual issues and themes into the curriculum, the Homosexuality Knowledge Index did not discriminate between those who would or would not engage in homophile activities.

The relationships among demographic variables (race, gender, certification area, childhood hometown, and status in program) vis-a-vis the expressed likelihood by preservice teachers to engage in these activities were explored. No significant ($p < .05$) differences were found with four exceptions. Preservice teachers coming from rural backgrounds were least likely to express a willingness to meet with homosexual adults to discuss the special needs of sexual minority students. Those students completing their student teaching were less likely than those at the early stage of their professional studies to desire to integrate homosexual issues or themes into the curriculum or to encourage the discussion of homosexuality in their classrooms. Finally, females were less likely than males to seek such curricular integration. Given the repeated measures used to determine these relationships, these four significant findings should be accorded little importance.

Summary. Despite their rudimentary knowledge about homosexuality and the relatively moderate negative attitudes toward homosexuality, there were several areas in which some preservice teachers expressed a willingness to address homosexuality or homosexual-related issues in the classroom. Most of these prospective teachers expressed a willingness to address homosexual-related harassment carried out by students or teachers. Few preservice teachers, however, feel comfortable privately counseling lesbian or gay students or working to end discrimination within their communities.

The expressed willingness of preservice teachers to address homosexual-related issues in the schools is highly correlated with their attitudes about homosexuality and their feelings toward lesbians and gay men. This relationship is most clearly seen in comparing low and high respondents' scores on the Professional Attitudes Index with their scores on the Attitudes Toward Homosexuality and the Index of Homophobia scales. Those who were most willing to adopt a proactive role in the schools were classified as non-homophobic and expressed tolerant attitudes

regarding homosexuality. Those who were not willing to assume such a proactive role tended to be more advanced in their professional studies. Among those who were at the early point in their teacher education curriculum, those who were white or who were majoring in secondary education evidenced a more proactive position than their counterparts.

The most direct measure of students' interest in pursuing a proactive role in the school was their anticipated professional activities. With the exception of attending a school-sponsored workshop on strategies for working with lesbian and gay students, only a minority expected to participate in any other activity. Those activities most directly related to teaching, classroom discussion and curriculum integration, were the least chosen areas of projected activity.

Again, the preservice teachers' scores on the ATH and the IH were significantly related to their decisions to participate in one or more of these eight activities. Preservice teachers who expressed less negative attitudes about homosexuality or harbored less homophobic feelings toward lesbians and gay men were more likely to indicate a willingness to engage such professional activities. Further, those who expressed more supportive professional attitudes regarding homosexual issues were also more likely to hold an expectation for participating in these activities. Interestingly, student knowledge about homosexuality, as measured on the HKI, was, with two exceptions, unrelated to their participation in these activities.

Section II: Conceptual Analysis

The first part of this section addresses the attitudes and feelings of future and present educators toward the issue of homosexuality and gay men and women. As I discuss the importance (and limitations) of gay role models and the special difficulties faced by homosexual teachers, I have interwoven the experiences (good, bad, and indifferent) of several gay youth with whom I conducted extensive interviews.[14] Part two of this section outlines an agenda for educators which those teaching in today's schools and those preparing to teach in the schools of

[14]Sears, in press

the future should adopt. Though the agenda addresses the needs of sexual minority students, my assumption is that making schools more humane, curriculum more relevant, and teaching more socially responsible benefits all students and contributes to the evolution of our democratic society.

High School Educators' Attitudes and Feelings. One of the more extensive areas of research in lesbian and gay studies is on adult attitudes toward homosexuality or feelings toward homosexual persons. Most assess persons' attitudes toward homosexuality rather than their reactions to homosexual persons.[15] The latter phenomenon has become known as "homophobia."

Popularized by sociologist Thomas Weinberg, this term originally meant an irrational fear of homosexual persons.[16] Over the years, however, homophobia has been expanded to include disgust, anxiety, and anger.[17] Further, it has been used to refer not only to the reactions of heterosexual persons but the internalization of negative feelings by homosexual men and women.[18]

Quasi-experimental research studies have demonstrated that adult males harbor more homophobic attitudes or feelings than females and are more concerned about male homosexuality than lesbianism.[19] Further, those with less negative feelings or attitudes are more likely to have

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[15]Hudson and Ricketts, 1980

[16]Weinberg, 1972

[17]MacDonald, 1976

[18]Lehne, 1976; Malyon, 1982; Margolies, Becker, Jackson-Brewer, 1987

[19]Aguero, Bloch, and Byrne, 1984; Braungart and Braungart, 1988; Coles and Stokes, 1985; Glassner and Owen, 1979; Hong, 1983; Larsen, Reed and Hoffman, 1980; MacDonald and Games, 1974; Minnigerode, 1976; Nyberg and Alston, 1977; West, 1977; Young and Whertvine, 1982. Conflicting data, however, have been reported using different samples or research instruments. For example, Sears (1988a) notes that male guidance counselors were less homophobic than their female counterparts and data from opinion polls (Irwin and Thompson, 1977; Schneider and Lewis, 1984) report no sex differences. Attributing these differences to population samples and attitudinal items, Herek (1986:565) in his review of this phenomenon, concludes "Males and females probably hold roughly similar positions on general questions of morality and civil liberties, but males are more homophobic in emotional reactions to homosexuality."

had associations or friendships with lesbians or gay men.[20] This study collaborates these findings.

There also have been studies which have assessed the attitudes and feelings of persons in the helping professionals toward homosexuality and homosexual persons.[21] These studies have found a heterosexual bias demonstrated in these persons' professional attitudes and homophobia evidenced in their personal feelings. Again, this pattern is consistent with the present study.

These studies suggest that teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors, in general, lack the sensitivity, knowledge, and skills to effectively address the needs of homosexual students. For example, most school administrators would dismiss a teacher for disclosing her homosexuality to students, less than one in five school counselors would willingly discuss the special concerns of lesbian and gay students at a school faculty meeting, and one-fourth of all college students preparing to teach acknowledged their inability to treat fairly a homosexual student or would discuss homosexuality in the classroom.[22]

In interviews with a purposive sample of 36 lesbian and gay southern youth, three-fourths of the participants reported that their high school teachers had negative attitudes about homosexuality and only six of these southern youth talked to a teacher about their sexuality.[23] In the study reported in this paper, less than five per cent of the 258 southern college students preparing to become teachers reported that at least some of their high school teachers were supportive of homosexual students. Not surprisingly, nearly one-half of this predominantly heterosexual sample had no idea of whether such support was extended by their teachers. Most, though, had first-hand knowledge of their teachers attitudes about homosexuality and their

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[20]Aguero, Bloch, and Byrne, 1984; Anderson, 1981; Gentry, 1986; Millham, San Miguel and Kellogg, 1976; Schneider and Lewis, 1984

[21]Davison and Wilson, 1973; Fort, Steiner and Conrad, 1971; Garfinkle and Morin, 1978; Gartrell, Kraemer and Brodie, 1974; May, 1974; Pauly and Goldstein, 1970

[22]Baker, 1980; Dressler, 1985; Fischer, 1982; Sears, 1988a

[23]Sears, in press

willingness to discuss the topic in the classroom. Of those who had some basis for first-hand knowledge, more than 80 percent reported few or none of their high school teachers considered homosexuality an alternative lifestyle or that classroom discussion included this topic.

These findings parallel the assessments of 142 South Carolina school guidance counselors surveyed during the same time period.[24] The vast majority observed that few, if any, of their school's teachers were supportive of gay and lesbian students, discussed homosexuality in the classroom, or considered it an alternative lifestyle. Further, slightly less than one-third of these professionals indicated that their building level administrators viewed homosexual concerns as legitimate topics for counselors to discuss with their school-age clients. Nevertheless, most guidance counselors reporting knowing at least one homosexual student during their professional tenure at their school, and four out of 10 counselors have discussed homosexuality and homosexual-related issues among their counseling staff or have counseled students about their homosexuality. Despite their interest and contacts, few of these guidance counselors felt prepared to work with this special population and less than one-fifth of the sample indicated that they had participated in programs to expand their knowledge about homosexuality.

As the social distance between students and homosexual persons lessen, a greater degree of discomfort is expressed by these counselors as well as prospective teachers.[25] Guidance counselors were much more likely to adopt liberal positions on civil rights issues (e.g., decriminalization of consenting adult homosexual relationships) but to hold a conservative moral views (e.g., homosexuality is a sin) and fear personal contact (being uncomfortable around lesbians or gay men).[26] Similarly, while two-thirds of the sample of prospective teachers approved of teachers who worked to lessen prejudicial attitudes about homosexuality more than

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[24]Sears, 1988a

[25]These patterns have been found in other studies leading one set of researchers to conclude, "[M]any people separate their moral censure of homosexuality per se and attitudes about the civil rights of homosexuals" (Irwin and Thompson, 1977:118). See also Gentry, 1986.

[26]Sears, 1988a

one-half of the sample would feel uncomfortable if their school hired an openly gay or lesbian teacher. Further, though these college students agreed that teachers, in general, must work in the school to lessen prejudicial attitudes about homosexuality, less than one-third indicated a willingness to work toward such an end within their communities.

Despite their personal misgivings about homosexuality, most school counselors and prospective teachers assumed a non-judgmental and sometimes supportive role when dealing with homosexual students. For example, the vast majority of counselors believed that sexual concerns of students were legitimate topics for discussion and a similar proportion of prospective teachers would discipline a student for harassing another student suspected of having a homosexual orientation. Nevertheless, while nearly two-thirds of the counselors had known a homosexual student, less than one-quarter have chosen to provide students with such counseling; while less than one-third of the preservice teachers would feel comfortable if a student talked to them about sexuality

Counselors and prospective teachers working with older students or who were farther along in their professional work or studies were most likely to express a willingness to work with sexual minority youth. Consistent with studies of other segments of the population, racial minorities and those with less education expressed more negative attitudes or feelings about homosexuality and toward homosexual persons.[27]

Given these findings it is not surprising that most southern lesbian and gay youth that I have interviewed reported high school educators adopting a neutral to negative position with respect to homosexuality.[28] While these educators do not go out of their way to let students know of their availability to discuss personal issues, most do not allow their prejudices against lesbians and gay men overtly to enter into the classroom or affect intervention with students experiencing

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[27]Baker, 1980; Glenn and Weaver, 1979; Irwin and Thompson, 1977; Nyberg and Alston, 1977

[28]Sears, in press

harassment. Nevertheless, school counselors were particularly singled out as insensitive, unknowledgeable, and distant.

Several lesbian and gay Southerners, such as Franklin, spoke at length about the difficulty they faced in school as the result of the negative attitudes of educators. Most, like Nathaniel and Carlton, noted that this topic was simply avoided by teachers, counselors, and administrators in their school. Guidance counselors, in particular, were viewed as academic not personal advisors. A few of the participants like Georgina, however, relayed stories of supportive educators who made a difference in their adolescent lives. Examples of each are provided by these and other Southerners.

Franklin lives in a predominantly black, rural South Carolina town. He remembers harassment from educators inside and outside the classroom:

> In high school, like the town, it was very hush-hush about homosexuality. You never talked to the students, teachers, principal, or counselors about it. They never talked to you about it. Even though I had two friends who were open and admitted it at the time, the teachers just ignored it and kept their feelings to themselves. But, the principal would always try to look out for the bad things these two were doing. He was always trying to get them for something. One day I was with my friends -- when you are with them you are labelled -- and this real flaming and feminine guy was telling someone off so the principal wrote him up and sent him to the "box" [in-school suspension]."

Franklin also recalled an incident with his high school physics teacher:

> Mr. Jenson would usually drift away from the subject. He'd often bring up homosexuality. He mainly talked about the wrongs of it and how it was such a sin and that they should be condemned. I felt really bad.

Other participants reported similar incidents. For example, Fawn remembers one teacher who "hated me because she knew I was gay. She would fill out these forms that got me into trouble and then make comments like, 'People like you...'"

Only a handful of participants reported speaking to a guidance counselor or teacher about their homosexuality. In general, they perceived these adults to be ill-informed and unconcerned

and they felt uncomfortable talking to them. The image of counselors communicated to these participants in this study was summed up by Kimberly, "Our counselors had never been presented to us as someone there to talk about problems other than education. They were just there for grades, signing up for classes, tests like the PSAT, and finding colleges to attend."

Similar sentiments were echoed about teachers and their unwillingness to show students their concern for lesbian and gay students or to express their feelings about homosexuality. A senior in high school, Nathaniel recalls a recent classroom discussion dealing with homosexuality:

> In my sociology class we were talking about AIDS. One guy said, "I think gay guys are just sick. How could they do that? It's wrong!" One of my friends who is gay asks, "Why do you think it's wrong?" Well, everyone looks over to Miss L., our teacher, for what she thinks. She says, "I have no comment. I'm not even going to get into this discussion. I'm going to keep my opinion to myself." So we lingered on this topic for awhile. I kept my mouth closed. Another guy said, "If a fag makes a move on me, I'd whip his ass." I thought to myself, "Yeah, right. We had gotten in a fight earlier and I liked dogged him out." Then two of the football players joined in. One was on each side. So, I piped up. (I had just gone into wrestling, so I was safe. The people who had been calling me gay had been coming up to me saying, "Hey man, I'm sorry for calling you queer.") So, I say "If you don't try it, you never will know what's going on. You're just going on hearsay. How can you judge these people? They're people too just because their sexuality is different."

This detachment of teachers from personal concerns and social issues was underscored repeatedly in my conversations with lesbian and gay youth. Carlton stated:

> Teachers seem to keep themselves so removed. In high school, teachers weren't people. They just lived in the school, went into the closet, stayed there over night, and then came out during the day, right? It was hard to think of them as real people. It was hard to interact with them. You know, a lot of the child's life is spent in school. If all that time is dealt with them through the book and not attending to any kind of personal needs, it just seems so ridiculous to me -- stilted. It puts such a damper on what could be done.

Georgina's comments illustrate how quickly young people can pick up on teachers' personal detachment from their students while students hide behind the role teachers expect them to assume:

> Teachers don't see much of your inner self. They don't ask. It's easy to put on a face with teachers. For example, Miss Morrison wanted someone very Christian-like, a little angel. For her, I wrote in my English journal about Jesus and love all the time. Mr. Boozer was the band director. He wanted somebody with good leadership skills who could play well. He got that. Mrs. Laman, she liked slaves. So, if you volunteered for everything, like I did, she liked you. As long as you keep them happy, they think that you're well-adjusted.

Carlton is studying to become a teacher. Arguing that "a teacher is involved in growth and guidance and not simply to teach math, science or English," he asserts:

> I would think that a student would be quicker to want talk to them if they had been kind to them. If they had just started talking to me on a personal basis. Just to talk about interests, "Well, how's the rest of school? What do you like to do? I hear you're in chorus?" I might have more easily been able to bring it up. I remember this one woman, she was so hard. It would not have taken much for her to have asked me more personal questions. Like, "Carlton, how are you doing in school and I don't mean academically?" She possibly could have made me think about things that I hadn't even gotten up to the conscious level yet and then just leave it open for me to talk about them with her. If she'd only have said, "If you want to talk about anything, you can" -- but she didn't.

Of course, as Darla's biography illustrates, not all students are ready to respond to teacher initiatives. In ninth grade, Darla had Mrs. Taxel for sex education. "At first I hated her. All I heard throughout the whole year was that she talked about her little grandson. Sure enough, the first day of class that was the first thing she talked about, her stupid grandson." After several weeks of engaging in subtle but defiant acts in the classroom, Darla found herself confronted by Mrs. Taxel:

> I got ready to walk out after class. She stopped me and slammed the door. "Sit down. We're talking," she said. "I can't understand why you dislike me so much." I said, "Frankly, because you're a bitch." Mrs. Taxel saw my cigarettes hanging

> out of my pocket. "Are those yours?" I told her they were. "Can I have one?" I said, "Sure." I handed her one and I got one. We just sat there smoking and talking. After that, we became good friends. I could talk to her about anything -- except being gay.

Most teachers, of course, are not as open or willing to engage adolescents on their own terms -- let alone to broach the subject of homosexuality. Carlton appreciates the teacher's dilemma. "Looking back, they probably were aware but afraid to talk about my homosexuality. Besides, they probably didn't know what kind of reaction they would get from me if they had tried or if they were wrong." Nevertheless, Carlton is resentful about the inability or unwillingness of educators to try to communicate with him.

> I felt cheated by school. There was so much potential, so much I could have done. We didn't nearly approach it. I've lost time, and a lot of that can't be gotten back. It was as if I was there for a prison term or they were my baby sitters without permission to do anything with me. Teachers act like that they have total authority and that they can do nothing all at the same time!

This latter point is well illustrated by Franklin's observation of how teachers in his high school dealt with slurs. "The teachers weren't very tolerant as far as racial slurs. If a teacher heard it, she might write him up. If there was a sexual slur, like 'fag,' they would pay no attention to it. That told me they didn't feel homophobia was as important as racism." Carlton concurs:

> If a teacher got tired of hearing these derogatory remarks they would only say "stop" -- never questioning as to why they were feeling that way or trying to make them think about what they were doing. Only that, "I just don't want to hear that." They would be a lot quicker to jump on other minority groups than homosexuals.

Despite the bleakness of these tales, there are educators who genuinely care about lesbian and gay students and try to work with them. One such person was Laura Huggins, a counselor intern at the school where Georgina attended.

In tenth grade, Georgina's lover, Kay, began to see Miss Huggins. After a while, she asked to see Georgina. She stopped by Miss Huggins' office for a quick chat. Georgina found her to be pleasant and mild-mannered. "She told me to see her if I had any problems." Six weeks

later, Georgina discovered that Kay was seeing another girl; a violent quarrel erupted. Thinking that she had no one to turn to, Georgina suddenly remembered Miss Huggins' words:

> I wrote Miss Huggins a note and slipped it under her door. The next time she saw me, she said, "I know. Do you want to talk about it?" I told her all about my relationship with Kay. She acted as kind of an umpire in our fight. I remember her telling me, "You have different walls around you, Georgina. Every once in a while a wall will collapse and you'll kick it back up. Someday they will all come down and you will get hurt. You'll be tempted to put them back up again. But, don't." I really didn't quite understand what she was saying but it was a relief not to have to put on an act around somebody.

Miss Huggins helped to mend the quarrel between the twosome. Georgina continued to see Kay through her sophomore year. Georgina reminisces, "When you first fall in love, you're always caught up. Love is blind. You can't see what is really going on around you. I knew that Kay liked other people and wanted to date them along with me. She just wasn't ready to settle down." A short time later Miss Huggins completed her internship at the school. Georgina regretted her departure:

> If Miss Huggins would have stayed, I feel that I would have accepted myself a lot better. But, they didn't send anybody else. I remember after she left feeling so sad and needing to talk to somebody. All the time I kept thinking, "I can do what Patton did; I could try to kill myself. I was going to take some sleeping pills and eat them right before my mom came home. I thought, "If she catches me in time, I'll get to talk to someone." I didn't want to kill myself; I just wanted to talk to someone who knew what they were talking about.

Though Nathaniel never found an educator like Miss Huggins with whom he could speak frankly, he did receive advice early in high school from an adult working at his school. At 14, Nathaniel hadn't identified himself as gay though he knew that he enjoyed males physically as well as socially. Nathaniel developed a crush with Reuben, a neighborhood boy three years his senior. The first time the two met, the older boy told Nathaniel, "'Look, I'm gay. I want you to know this if you have any problems.' I had no problems with that and we soon became real close."

Nathaniel continues, "One night we got some beer and got wasted or, at least acted like we were drunk. We started feeling on each other, grabbing one another. One thing lead to another and we just kept going."

Nathaniel also had sexual fantasies about girls and enjoyed their emotional company. About this time he started to date Delta. "I was scared, I really was. I was wondering if I was going to lose my feelings for Delta who I loved while I still really loved Reuben. Confused about these feelings, Nathaniel "thought about talking to the counselor, but I just didn't build up enough nerve." He finally sat down in the corridor after school one day and just cried. Suddenly he felt a gentle tap on his shoulder. Looking up he saw Ol' Jessie, the school's janitor. His short grey hair stood out against his black skin. Jessie invited Nathaniel down to his "office." Once in the boiler room, the two pulled up a couple of crates and had a long talk. "He told me that I was too young to even worry about being a homosexual. 'Every man,' he said, 'has them feelings. You're going to look over at another guy in the bathroom and say, 'I'm big enough. Can I satisfy this person?' Then I sat down and thought. "Well, if it's normal for someone to have homosexual feelings, why isn't it normal for a guy to try homosexual sex?"

Having supportive adults such as Miss Huggins and Ol' Jessie was certainly helpful to Georgina and Nathaniel. Though most participants in this study indicated that they would have liked to have had such educators while attending high school, some like Audrey, Kimberly, Phillip, and Franklin were much more reticent about such prospects. There were a variety of reasons for such caution including the unwillingness of the student to assume the initiative, a lack of trust in confidentiality, the worry of loosing teacher friendship, and personality differences. Audrey states, "I did not have direct counseling. I'm glad because I don't know how I would have acted. In high school if it were to get out I would have been so embarrassed. I could not have stood the peer pressure." Kimberly remembers:

> I didn't talk to counselors because they're human, too. Homosexuality is taboo. People just kind of go bonkers when they hear that word or find out that somebody

> is homosexual. Even the adults act like kids. They don't know how to handle it. I thought, "I can't trust anybody with this information." You know, teachers talk.

This was echoed by Franklin, "I didn't want them to know my feelings. I wasn't that trusting of them. I felt that they might tell my parents." Phillip, who enjoyed close friendship with several teachers, feared sharing his sexual feelings because it would be "like risking them not liking me."

In addition to knowledgeable and sensitive heterosexual adults, the importance of gay and lesbian role models has been stressed by professionals in a variety of fields.[29] Such persons are important for homosexual students who feel isolation and confusion and for those who harbor stereotypically negative images of homosexual persons.

Of course, there were no openly lesbian or gay teachers working at the high schools in South Carolina attended by these participants. Almost all of these homosexual southern youth, however, suspected one or more teachers and about one-quarter reported that they had a class with a teacher who they "knew" was lesbian or gay. For most, of course "knowing" amounted to little more than hearsay and personal suspicions. There were, however, exceptions. The experience of Fawn illustrate the important personal relationships that can develop between student and teacher.

Fawn didn't label herself "lesbian" until she had graduated from high school. During her last two years in school, however, she hung around several teachers in the school, two of whom were lovers, who helped her to feel good about herself:

> I didn't want to face what I was feeling at all about anything or anybody. But, I knew I cared about this woman a lot. She went out and bought some books and said, "Why don't you read this and tell me what you think?" She would get me into these conversations. However, the most embarrassing experience was when we were walking down the mall. She put her arm around me and kissed me saying, "I just want to let you know that I love you." I was so aware of being gay at that time even though she was straight. I just died. There were also two lesbian teachers in this group. I liked them a lot. They were good role models for me in the sense that it's okay to have feelings toward other people if you really do love them.

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[29]Griffin, 1989; Hetrick and Martin, 1987; Martin and Hetrick, 1988; Morin, 1974; Riddle, 1978; Ross-Reynolds and Hardy, 1985; Slater, 1988; Wein, 1982

Lesbian and gay adult role models also are critical for the heterosexual student population. In reviewing the evidence regarding the adequacy of lesbians and gay men as role models, psychologist Dorothy Riddle concluded:

> Rather than posing a menace to children, gays may actually facilitate important developmental learning. To offset the pressures of a heterosexual society toward adopting traditional sex-role behavior, gays often demonstrate a variety of alternative adaptations. Thus children have the possibility of learning that it is possible and may be rewarding to resist traditional sex-role socialization. In addition, children become exposed to the concept of cultural and individual diversity as positive rather than threatening.[30]

Moreover, as educator Pat Griffin notes, "pretending that there are no gay and lesbian teachers allows most students to go through school with their stereotypes and fears about gay people unchallenged."[31]

Ironically, as Griffin and others have detailed, while lesbian and gay teachers are well aware of the hostility and isolation that homosexual students confront they are fearful of the personal and professional consequences that such public disclosure might have.[32] She writes, "Being a gay or lesbian educator requires a strict separation between personal and professional life. Moreover, teachers are united in the belief that to be publicly "out" at school would cost them their jobs."[33]

Lorin Richards has taught English and coached sports at a large suburban South Carolina school for the 10 years. He has never discussed the topic in public or private with his high school students. Asked if he had thought about mentioning Whitman's sexuality when discussing his poetry or focusing on modern day "scarlet letters" when reading Hawthorne's classic novel, Richards froze:

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[30]Riddle, 1978:53

[31]Griffin, 1989:4

[32]Fischer, 1983; Fogarty, 1980; Griffin, 1989; Nickeson, 1981; Olson, 1987; Smith, 1984; Woods, 1989

[33]Griffin, 1989:6

> There is a kind of terror that runs through my mind when I think about that. There's a Pandora's Box that's open with that. If I tried to deal with it in that fashion how would it be accepted? It's bringing that thing out into the open and making them think about it. I remember this one very blatant student went to the administration years ago and asked to have something like a gay meeting group. I wouldn't have the courage or stupidity to do that, but he did. The administration still jokes about that. So, I just don't know if students are mature enough or whether that's a subject that in this environment we can deal with. We teach things that are safe.

The great ambivalence felt by teachers such as Richards is reflected in his referral to homosexuality as "it," or "the issue." This ambivalence also is reflected in his teaching and being "out" in the classroom:

> Most people who teach who are gay are not so much openly gay although it's not a secret. But, it's not something that we go around and talk about with any of our peers on the faculty. It's basically a public thing that isn't public. I think maybe its cowardice on my part. But, it's made me think a lot about how close to get around some students in some situations. I used to be a little more personal on the kind of things I talked about. You know how kids are always asking about your dating and stuff. Now, I try to keep myself from getting into the kind of relationship with a student or a class that allows those questions to come up. I don't want to have to lie.

Further, according to Richards, an openly gay teacher does not necessarily satisfy the needs of gay or lesbian students. He remembers, "There was one teacher who was very openly gay but in all the very negative, stereotypical ways. He was not the kind of a person that anyone would confide anything in." Richards also fears the consequences that "public" exposure might bring:

> I know that among certain groups of students the thought about me being gay is there. They don't have any facts. But, it's one of those things that kid sense. It's scary. They know things that are true but they don't know for sure they know. These people really do get real close to that issue sometimes.

These fears are far from illusory. While less than 10 percent of a nationwide sample of junior high and high school principals would summarily dismiss a teacher for simply "being gay"

more than one-half of the respondents would favor the revocation of the teaching license should a competent and veteran teacher, like Mr. Richards, disclose his homosexuality to students.[34] Thus, in the minds of most administrators, public knowledge is sufficient grounds to invalidate one's ability to teach, despite the fact that three-fourths of these principals reported that in cases where disclosure occurred no negative effects in the school were evident and where problems did exist they subsided in a "relatively short time."

Nevertheless, even educational moderates question the conduct of teachers who profess their homosexuality to students. In one popular magazine, the authors bluntly assert:

> Parents and school authorities have a right to demand that homosexual teachers refrain from using the classroom as a forum. This is not to single them out for special limitations. Heterosexual teachers are expected not to parade their political or sexual preference before their students. If teachers are entitled to the full protection of their privacy, it ought to follow that they themselves are not going to void that privilege.[35]

Such an argument, of course, is comfortably blind to the daily parading of a heterosexual curriculum before its students, the isolation and hostility experienced by homosexual students, and the simple yet oppressive presumption of heterosexuality in everyday interactions. The authors, too, are unmindful of the social fact, eloquently elaborated upon by Guy Hocquenghem, that homosexuality ceases to be a private matter when heterosexuality is woven throughout our institutions, policies, and culture.

Fear and ignorance often dictate how persons react to homosexual educators. Lesbian and gay educators, however, often are woefully unaware of the routine legal assistance provided by organizations such as the National Education Association and the legal and bureaucratic morass created when an educator's homosexual identity is made public. Based upon legal research into this area, Karen Harbeck concluded:

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[34]Dressler, 1985

[35]Hechinger and Hechinger, 1978:164

> Because of the complexities of the legal and social issues, and because of the seemingly limitless legal and financial resources on both sides, the courts appear to have tried to avoid a direct declaration concerning whether or not homosexuals have a constitutional right to teach school. As long as the judiciary chooses to avoid taking the initiative on this controversial issue, tremendous room is left for negotiation and education. School boards seem more than willing to look the other way with respect to a teacher's homosexual orientation unless some indiscretion has occurred, and they certainly seem to be more willing to negotiate than to face the costly expense of litigation.... [C]redential revocation on the basis of homosexuality is a thing of the past.[36]

In a more general review of the legal implications of the sexual identity and classroom activities of homosexual teachers, Fernand Dutile, professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame, recommends to school administrators:

> [E]ven if school officials should learn of a teacher's homosexuality or of homosexual activity, no action should be taken against that teacher on the basis of undifferentiated fear, speculation as to what could happen, vague concerns about modelling roles or even the possible inference of school board approval to which retention of the teacher might give rise. Any action taken against the teacher should be based on actual and significant harm to the school system or the real likelihood of such harm. Surely, the objections of a few teachers, students or parents, especially in light of the likelihood that the real problem is theirs, not the teacher's, should not suffice.[37]

There is, though, a fundamental distinction between private or even public knowledge of a educator's homosexuality, and that person becoming an advocate for the needs and rights of sexual minority students or the inclusion of knowledge about homosexual persons and homosexuality in relevant topics of the high school curriculum. Here, the direct involvement of heterosexual educators is essential. This direct involvement can, however, be solicited by homosexual teachers like Mr. Richards who privately or publicly disclose their sexual identity to faculty or students.

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[36]Harbeck, 1989: 23-24, 26. For a more detailed discussion of particular cases involving educators, see: Dressler, 1978; Hansen, 1977; Harbeck, 1988; Lowe, 1977; Rausch, 1974

[37]Dutile, 1986:127-128

Such acts not only raise the awareness level of other persons in the school, but can move well-meaning educators toward a variety of reflective and specific actions. As one heterosexual educator wrote:

> When Geoff came out in the classroom his initial need for support called on my beliefs in professional solidarity and led to changes in my own attitudes to gays. I was forced to become far more positive when talking about gays, and became sensitized to homosexuality and its problems for the first time.[38]

An Agenda for Educators. The 36 young adults I interviewed as part of the study of the quality of life for homosexual students in the South are survivors. They survived taunts and torments of childhood or vaguely uncomfortable feelings about being different. They survived the coupling of racial, gender, or class oppression with homosexuality. They survived religious zealots and the importance of honor in the southern family. They survived fleeting homosexual liaisons and long-term silent relationships. They survived incest and rape, rumor and scandal, threats and beatings. In the silence of their souls, they hid and they lied -- but they survived.

Carlton, Georgina, Nathaniel -- these are the fortunate ones. There are nameless others who have not survived. Some departed the heterosexual world through suicide, drug overdose, or alcohol-related accidents. Others entered the netherworld of closeted homosexuality through marriages of convenience or baptismal waters. Others escaped into worlds within worlds: the convent, the asylum, the prison. Some have fallen into the black hole of homosexual culture in which the security of a homosexual identity supplants the search for Self. They have not survived to retell their lives; each of us share responsibility for their untold stories.

There is, though, the next generation. A generation for which the Reagan years and the decades of dominance by Helms and Thurmond will be but another era in the dustbin of history. Theirs is a generation in which super-conductivity will be as common as the super-computers. But, there are other less certain future events. Will theirs be a generation in which American becomes more like the Old South or the New South becomes more like the American ideal? Will

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[38]Gay Teachers Group, 1987: 80

theirs be a generation in which violence against lesbians and gay men is as socially unacceptable as that of African-Americans today or will bands of skin-heads roam across the land preying on the weak and despised as freely as our hand roams the radio band finding fundamentalist preachers preying on our fears? The choice is ours. How we address the needs of sexual minority students and the topic of homosexuality in the schools is the bellwether for the next generation. Our choices can make schools a more humane place to live and learn for all students. Let's begin to work on a common ground (economic justice, human rights) against common evils (sexism, racism, heterosexism) to address common concerns (at risk students, educational equity, school violence).

As educators we must begin by examining our personal feelings about homosexuality and professional thoughts about education.[39] This involves asking personal questions, such as: How do I feel when talking about sexuality? During my childhood, how was the subject of homosexuality treated? Did I have any friends who I later found out were gay or lesbian? Do I feel uncomfortable expressing feelings toward members of my own sex? This also involves addressing professional questions, such as: In a democratic society, what should schools teach? Is the acquisition of academic or technical skills sufficient? Can schools instill knowledge about the world without encouraging self-knowledge? Are democratic attitudes, values of tolerance and respect for diversity, and the development of critical thinking fostered in the school curriculum? Within an effective learning environment, what relationships should exist between educators and students?

By examining the school's role in a democratic society the importance of fostering analytical thought and expanding tolerance is clear. Two researchers note, "Education fosters intellectual flexibility and breadth of perspective, with toleration of nonconformity requiring a degree of analytic ability that is very difficult to achieve without formal education."[40] Sadly, most public schools in the South are training grounds for a narrow set of moral and religious beliefs: a

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[39]Other sources of ideas for educational strategies in working with homosexual students or addressing homosexuality within the school curriculum include: Gay Teachers Group, 1987; Morey, 1984; Sears, 1983; Warren, 1984

[40]Irwin and Thompson, 1977: 119

page from a teacher's textbook on health science is order removed by the Board of Education for its discussion of birth control; books are removed from the shelves of a high school library which carry references to homosexuality; school supplies are used to announce church-related activities; teachers are threatened with dismissal for discussing homosexuality, abortion, and other "controversial" topics. Schools, held hostage to Bible-thumping fundamentalists and right-wing ideologues, are not only painful places for homosexual students to learn but difficult places for educators sensitive to their needs to work.

Public schools in a democratic society are a marketplace for ideas. Like Justice Brennan, I believe that "access to ideas prepares students for active and effective participation in the pluralistic, often contentious society in which they will soon be adult members."[41] But, spreading ominously across America is a virulent plague of ignorance and fear. Many school children are ignorant of homosexuality, and many citizens fear discussing the topic with the exception of cruel jokes or sexual innuendo. This plague, so toxic to compassion and common sense, is spread by purveyors of a supposedly moral agenda. But the concern of the True Believers, such as members of the Eagle Forum, is hardly moral. They do not want to eradicate ignorance and fear; they want schools to propagate their skewed concept of morality. Because they accept the axiom that sexual knowledge may lead to sexual activity, no Tree of Knowledge is welcomed in the Eden of the True Believer.

In the South, many schools are part of this Orwellian conspiracy in which school knowledge is what is salvaged after the scissors and paste philosophy of religious zealots is applied. Yet, in the final analysis, the fear of offending man not God is at the root of much of the cowardice evidenced by todays' educators. However, just as the literary world stood up in protest when religious tenets are used to condemn a novelist so must professional educators stand up when those armed with Scriptural passages propagate a philosophy of ignorance and prejudice which is neither moral nor rational. The literary world did not tolerate censorship of the *Satanic*

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[41] Dutile, 1986: 37

Verses by bookstore chains for "the protection" of the public and neither should educators tolerate such censorship on the grounds of "the protection" of children.

As we reflect upon these and other questions we must also *act*. This means reading about homosexuality and interacting with lesbians and gay persons. Some of us might be astounded to know the number of homosexual persons with whom we already know. But, as evidenced in my own research, few educators willingly sit down and talk with lesbian and gay adults to learn first hand about the special problems facing gay youth. Fewer, too, are willing to accept an openly homosexual teacher on their faculty.

The importance of lesbian and gay educators as role models for homosexual students has been discussed widely.[42] What is seldom stated, however, is that these teachers' personal visibility can profoundly affect the attitudes of heterosexual educators and students. The opportunities to interact with lesbians and gay men and, particularly, to establish friendship patterns with these people, is significantly related to less negative attitudes and feelings about homosexuality and toward homosexual persons.[43]

There are degrees of support that the concerned educator can provide to lesbian and gay students. As I have already suggested, the most basic step is to examine one's own beliefs, feelings, and prejudices in the light of scholarship, introspection, and dialogue with lesbians and gay men. This should be encouraged by teacher educators as the special needs of sexual minority students are discussed in their courses. The first public step is to longer tolerate sexual prejudice or harassment of any type in the school or to permit others the luxury of such toleration. Public school systems such as Berkeley and Cambridge have adopted anti-slur policies and non-harassment guidelines. Within the school, those who utter "dyke" jokes, parody "faggot" mannerisms, or physically intimidate students are met with swift and certain punishment.[44]

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[42]Griffin, 1989; Hetrick and Martin, 1987; Martin and Hetrick, 1988; Morin, 1974; Riddle, 1978; Ross-Reynolds and Hardy, 1985; Slater, 1988; Wein, 1982

[43]Coles and Stokes, 1985; Schneider and Lewis, 1984; Sears, 1988a

[44]Peterkin, 1987

Challenging stereotypical thinking with regard to gender and sex role norms also is an important strategy in making the school a psychologically safe environment for all students. There is a consistent finding across research studies that links negative attitudes toward homosexual persons with their perceived violation of sex role norms.[45] Not only do people stereotype lesbians and gay men according to opposite sex role stereotypes (the butch woman, the effeminate man), but those homosexual males who fall outside the stereotypical image are those who are most despised.[46] This suggests that not only do negative attitudes buttress traditionally rigid sex role norms but that curriculum designed to break down gender-specific behaviors may result in less negative attitudes about homosexual persons. Questions about sex roles, as posed by social psychologist A. P. MacDonald, appear germane in the high school and college curriculum: "Where do they come from? How are we socialized to them? How are they enforced? How do 'masculinity' and 'femininity' fit with maleness and femaleness?"[47]

Challenging taken-for-granted concepts such as "masculinity" and "femininity" among adolescents as well as establishing anti-slur policies benefits every student. Gerry Sutter elaborates on the costs paid by heterosexual males for such rigid thinking:

> Homophobia completely undermines the natural ability of men to love other men deeply. Thus homophobia dehumanizes not only gays, the obvious targets of oppression, but any man who is isolated from others. Homophobia perpetuates and sanctions our isolation. We experience rigid, critical, competitive, and fearful relationships with others. We fear and systematically mistreat those who are not of our gender, age, class, race, or religion. Thus our shallow, arms-length, distrustful, and antagonistic relationships with other men validates every irrational and rigid behavior pattern that we have with women and children as well.[48]

Sutter goes on to provide a wealth of examples:

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[45]Dunbar, Brown and Amoroso, 1973; MacDonald, 1974; Morin and Garfinkle, 1978

[46]Storms, 1978; Taylor, 1983

[47]MacDonald, 1974:179

[48]Sutter, 1988:3

> Many women are frustrated with men's apparent emotional numbness. Men seem emotionally stupid, if not careless and irresponsible.... Men run away from intimate relationships by working hard. We bury our psyches in external focus.... Our obsession with sex is directly tied to our fear of sex. This is the paradox of homophobia. Sex and our fear of it involves much more than fornication: vulnerability, emotions, intimacy....We are given so little validation for being good friends, for being nurturing, and in many circles, for being intelligent. Is it any surprise that many men find that their only special domain is violence?[49]

Of course, the homosexual taboo not only does violence against individuals but undergirds structural relations within society. In his classic essay, "Homophobia Among Men," Gregory Lehne links negative feelings of males toward gay men with the regulation of sexuality and work:

> The male role is predominantly maintained by men themselves. Men devalue homosexuality, then use this norm of homophobia to control other men in their male roles. Since any male could potentially (latently) be a homosexual, and since there are certain social sanctions which can be directed against homosexuals, the fear of being labeled a homosexual can be used to ensure that males maintain appropriate male behavior. Homophobia is only incidentally directed against homosexuals -- its more common use is against the 49% of the population which is male.... The taunt "*What are you, a fag*?" is used in many ways to encourage certain types of male behavior and to define the limits of "acceptable" masculinity.[50]

Edging toward the more risky side of the continuum, educators can begin to integrate a healthy attitude toward the panorama of human sexual experience into the curriculum. Frank discussions and accurate information can replace school yard banter and sexual myths. Traditionally, a watered-down version of this task is assigned to "sex educators." The thinking is, if sex must be taught then the most logical place within the school curriculum is a unit called "sex education" with subject specialists. Such logic, however, leads to a dismembering of the school curriculum. Sexuality is no longer an integral component of our culture and human history. In

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[49]Sutter, 1988:3-4

[50]Lehne, 1976:78

most states, including many in the South, most students (or their parents) have the opportunity for sex education. Nearly 75 per cent of students in U.S. schools receive some form of sex education prior to leaving high school.[51] And, about that same percentage of adults favor the inclusion of sex education at the high school level. Further, those topics which most adults feel the curriculum should are AIDS, birth control, venereal disease, reproductive biology, and teen pregnancy. Homosexuality is the topic least mentioned. But, the percentage of public opinion favoring its inclusion at the high school level has risen from 45 to 56 percent during this decade.[52]

The South, though, is less likely to address such controversial topics. In South Carolina, for example, AIDS and an upsurge in teenage pregnancy has recently prompted the legislature to mandate some form of sex education. "The Comprehensive Health and Education Act of 1988 " prescribed instruction beginning at kindergarten with the sex education component integrated in junior high school. While sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy prevention (at the discretion of the local school board) are included, the bill explicitly prohibits "a discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships including, but not limited to, homosexual relationships except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted diseases" as well as information about abortion.[53] Teachers violating the statute are subject to dismissal. In South Carolina, the image of the Palmetto not the Tree of Knowledge flies above the state capitol (right above the Confederate battle flag).

Even in those states where there is not a statutory restriction on the discussion of homosexuality, many school districts have forbidden its discussion or teachers have taken it upon themselves to avoid this and other controversial topics.[54] Thus, what little instruction does occur

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[51]Kirby, 1984

[52]Gallup and Clark, 1987

[53]Comprehensive Health Education Act of 1988:5. An earlier version of the bill which included the provision that any discussion of homosexuality must be presented as "unnatural, unhealthy, and illegal" died in committee.

[54]Kirby and Alter, 1980; Sonenstein and Pittman, 1984; Trudell, 1988

in high school (In South Carolina 750 minutes during the four years are mandated), primarily consists of sexual hydraulics and social relations skills.[55]

If homosexuality is discussed anywhere in the curriculum, one would expect to find it within health curriculum. In reviews of representations of homosexuality in high school texts, researchers have found few references to the subject and many of those references are blatantly homophobic.[56] And, those few texts that treat homosexuality in at least a neutral manner tend to "ghettoize" it by discussing the topic in a condensed section or switching from a personalized "you" voice to a detached "they" format. "This treatment," note health care specialists Katherine Whitlock and Elena DiLapi, "implies that homosexuality is less significant than or inferior to heterosexuality -- an auxiliary form of sexuality, if you will, and somehow just not "the real thing."[57] This heterosexual bias extends into the college texts in psychology and health science.[58]

Given these problems, it is little wonder that other subjects in the high school curriculum are devoid of references to homosexual men and women or the topic of homosexuality -- although many resources are currently available to the concerned educator.[59] The homosexual experience has been expurgated from the high school curriculum and the library shelves. In English, students can read Whitman's a "Song of Myself" in *Leaves of Grass* or McCuller's *The Ballad of the Sad*

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[55]In one of the few ethnographic studies of a sex education unit, Bonnie Trudell concluded "sexuality information was characterized as neutral and factual rather than controversial or value-laden.... content actually relevant to their life outside the classroom was for some students reduced to material whose major relevance was meeting grade requirements.... Acknowledgement of the physical pleasure of sexual behavior was absent; instead, pleasure was presented as an outcome of 'responsible' sexual behavior in a traditional family context" (Trudell, 1988:19-20). Though those teachers who are most comfortable with their sexuality are more likely to include more controversial topics and transcend the biomechanical model of sex education, these teachers also find themselves restricted by the content of assigned textbooks (Yarber and McCabe, 1981).

[56]Newton, 1982; Whitlock and DiLapi, 1983

[57]Whitlock and DiLapi, 1983:20

[58]McDonald, 1981; Newton, 1979; Stevernagel, 1981

[59]Useful bibliographies and anthologies include: Bullough, 1976; Foster, 1985; Grier, 1981; Grier and Reid, 1976; Katz, 1976; Katz, 1983; Rule, 1975; Sarittem 1878.

Cafe without ever a hint of their physical love for persons of the same sex, in the classics they can translate the drama of Sophocles and the philosophy of Socrates without ever exploring cultural differences regarding same-sex behavior, in history they can study the military genius of Alexander the Great without ever knowing of the importance of male lovers for him and other members of his army; in mathematics students can marvel at the genius of computer founder Alan Turing and be ignorant of his sexual struggles, in physical education students can exchange "fag" jokes while admiring sports stars such as Martina Navratilova and David Kopay; music and drama students play from the works of Bessie Smith or Oscar Wilde without knowing to whom some of their art was dedicated.

An off-handed reference to the sexual orientation of one of these persons in context of discussing their work or the listing of several biographical books where students can discover the homosexuality of some famous people would have been welcomed curriculum additions to these southern youth. The placement of library materials is also an important consideration in an environment that, as Carlton noted, never seems to be safe. "I was thinking that people were always watching everything I did. So, I didn't really seek out any material about gays or lesbians but I kept my eyes open. If I saw something and I was in a situation where I could just nonchalantly look at it and not be seen doing it, I'd do it." Yet, prospective teachers were least likely to express a willingness to engage in such activities within their classrooms of the future.

Critics might chide that homosexuality is not relevant to the accomplishments of these men and women. This position is not supported by an examination of many of these biographies and, as every lesbian and gay man knows, within a society in which heterosexuality is prescribed, sexuality identity is important.[60] Strangely, educators who have little difficulty acknowledging the relevance of race, gender, or religion in such biographies find bothersome the inclusion of sexuality. Imagine, if you can, talking about the political contributions of W.E.B. DuBois without

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[60]See, for example, the following biographies: Hodges, 1983; Hyde, 1984; Kopay and Young 1977; Navratilova and Vecsey, 1985; Richardson, 1982.

mentioning race, reading the writings of Jane Austen without mentioning gender, marveling at the painting of Raphael without speaking of religion?

None of these activities, however, substitutes for directly addressing the needs of lesbian and gay youth. Young people need a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which they can process their feelings and come to terms with their sexuality.[61] They need to find out that they are not so unique, that others have similar problems, and that they are "Okay," Schools, in general, do not provide these opportunities.

There are, of course, notable exceptions.[62] One is Project 10 in the Fairfax High School of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Established as an on-campus counseling program in 1984 for homosexual youth, the project has come under intense attack from conservative groups. In a recent interview, the director of the project, Virginia Uribe recalled how this project was initiated:

> [T]here was a classic incident at Fairfax High involving a young man who had been transferred here because he had been harassed out of his previous school. He confronted a tremendous amount of harassment here in full view of the teachers. Nothing was done about it. He was transferred out of this school into another and finally ended up on the streets. That got me so angry that I decided to spend my remaining years in teaching trying to see if the educational system will begin to confront the issue of young gays and lesbians.... I had a couple of kids in my class who knew this kid and asked them, "How would you like to start a little informal lunch time rap group?" They thought I was crazy. No one had ever addressed that

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[61]Targagni, 1978; Jones, 1978

[62]Several social service agencies and community non-profit organizations have established lesbian and gay youth counseling centers. These include the Eromin Center in Philadelphia, the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York, the Sexual Minority Assistance Project in Washington, DC, and the Larkin Street Shelter in San Francisco (Ashkinazy, 1984; Bridgman, 1985; DeMarco, 1983; Vergara, 1983-84). Others have sought to "mainstream" lesbian and gay services into traditional agencies such as the Gay and Lesbian Counseling Program of Minneapolis (Grace and Feigal, 1984).

> issue. But, they agreed and in about four weeks I had 25 kids showing up for these sessions.[63]

Uribe went on to underscore the importance of visible signs from educators that "it is okay to talk about homosexuality: brochures, signs, newspaper articles. If these kids don't see anything that relates to them it is interpreted as a taboo topic."[64]

Given the one-on-one professional-client relationship enjoyed by school guidance counselors, these educators are in pivotal positions to provide confidential and supportive personal counseling to lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. Unfortunately, the majority of these counselors are engaged in activities ranging from testing and career counseling to mundane administrative tasks that leave little time for such work and that convey a message of unapproachability to homosexual students. Less than 20 percent of their average work week is spent on personal counseling.[65] Nevertheless, for the concerned counselor a variety of resources and strategies in working with lesbian and gay adolescents have been suggested.[66]

Lesbian and gay students, of course, are not the only population that needs to be targeted for counseling. Intervention workshops with heterosexual youth and members of the helping profession must also be conducted.[67] Several studies have found that educational intervention provides an opportunity for participants to re-think these stereotypical images.[68] For example, college students participating in a human sexuality course resulted in less negative attitudes toward homosexuality. These researchers concluded "informative and educational efforts reduce prejudice as a result of a reduction in the general level of authoritarian thinking."[69] In this study, the more

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[63]Sears, 1989c:2

[64]Sears, 1989c:8

[65]Sears, 1988a

[66]Gumaer, 1987; Krysiak, 1987; Ross-Reynolds, 1982; Ross-Reynolds and Hardy, 1985; Schneider and Tremble, 1986; Woodman and Lenna, 1980

[67]Dillon, 1986; Gochros, 1975; Stewart, 1984

[68]Larsen, Gate and Reed, 1983; Schneider and Tremble, 1986

[69]Larsen, Cate and Reed, 1983:117

knowledgeable the preservice teacher was about homosexuality the less negative attitudes toward the subject and feelings toward homosexual persons were evidenced. Students who demonstrated the least knowledge harbored the most negative attitudes and were the most homophobic.

There is a problem, however, in dealing with prejudice against lesbians and gay men (or any minority) on purely the attitudinal or cognitive level. A recent review of selected sexuality programs concluded that the impact of such programs is on the knowledge level: attitudes and feelings are a neglected dimension in most programs.[70] In many ways, the Scandinavian countries evidence greater tolerance toward sexuality, in general, and homosexuality, in particular, than countries such as the United States. A recent study of the relationship between the affective and cognitive components of homophobic reaction underscored the difficulty in only focusing upon attitudes. The researchers states, "In our society it is socially desirable for many people to be outwardly nonprejudiced. Therefore, they learn positive attitudes toward homosexuals at a cognitive level, while they might repress their negative reactions at an emotional level. A confrontation with homosexuality can evoke the repressed negative reactions..."[71]

Attitudes and feelings, of course, need not be static. Several researchers have reported on the positive impact which seminars, lectures, guest speakers, films, debate and dialogue have had on reducing prejudice against lesbians and gay men.[72] Those courses which demanded active involvement by students such as role playing appeared the most promising in effecting and sustaining attitudinal change.[73] But, shifts in persons' attitudes or feelings do not mean that concomitant changes in behavior will occur. The expression of attitudes on a paper-and-pencil test is not necessarily consistent with behavior exhibited within specific contexts.[74]

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[70]Kirby, 1984; Woods and Mandetta, 1975

[71]Ernuff and Innala, 1987:508

[72]Dearth and Cassell, 1976; Goldberg, 1982; Greenberg, 1975; MacLaury, 1982; Morin, 1974

[73]Watter, 1987

[74]Morin, Taylor and Kielman, 1975

The cumulative impact that these and other actions would have had upon the 36 lesbians and gay youth interviewed for this study would have been significant. It is with their voices that this paper concludes.

> Now that I have been exposed to all of these things I wish it would have been done in my high school. I've come to a place where I'm more at peace with myself. Now I am willing to accept who I am and come to the realization that I am not a bad person because I am gay. I just happen to be a gay person. High schoolers are going through enough trouble trying to figure out who they are and what they want without also having to go through the additional hard times of being gay and having people who won't accept them. -- 'Lizabeth

> I wouldn't have had the inner turmoil. I wouldn't have had to go out with guys. I would have had a choice. Probably, my behavior wouldn't have been as delinquent. They also would have gotten more out of me in terms of school work. I also probably would have been more honest. I wouldn't have been trying to sabotage myself. -- Fawn

> I don't know whether or not they should teach in high school that homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle. But, it should be brought out that if they are having homosexual feelings that that is normal at that age. Why wait until someone is 22 to point that out to them? Most adolescents find themselves in situations like that and think that something is terribly wrong with them. -- Grant

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